THE CASE OF Peoples Duty In Living Under A Scandalous Minister, STATED and RESOLVED.

LONDON,
Printed for *Sam. Tidmarsh*, at the *Kings-Head* in *Cornhill*, near the *Royal Exchange*. 1684.

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Scandalous Miniſter.

Honoured Sir,

I Muſt needs acknowledge that Yours is indeed a moſt ſweet and pleaſant Seat, but there is this inward allay (as you ſay) to that outward Felicity, that your lot is caſt under a Scandalous Miniſter, your *Light is Darkneſs*, your *Salt hath loſt its Savour*, and your Tree of Life is guarded (as you complain) by an evil Angel. And now what courſe is to be taken? What muſt you do for your Souls health? This makes your dwelling *Meſhec* and your otherwiſe moſt delightful *Habitation*, as *among the Tents of* Kedar.

I could heartily wiſh you had asked my Opinion in a more pleaſing Subject, and that you had commanded me to ſpeak in a Cauſe wherein I might have more hopes of being heard, inſtead of this which is ſurrrounded with almoſt invincible prejudices. However, to comply with your importunity, I ſhall make bold to offer ſome few things in Anſwer to the Queſtion propounded by you.

1. If his Life be Notorious, make it yet more ſo by complaint; let his *Dioceſan* know it, and ſee to it that the Church Cenſures paſs upon him. The Laws are not ſo weak; nor yet their Adminiſtration ſo remiſs, but they will eaſe you and themſelves of ſuch a rotten Member; they will with-draw the fewel to his exorbitances, by ſuſpending the *Profits*, and diſable him from all publick taking Gods Word into his mouth, who hateth to be reform'd by ſuſpenſion from his *Office*: Nor need you be afraid of ſo doing, for all good Men will approve and applaud this your moſt Pious Zeal; they will thank and not upbraid you for it, and will even concur with you in the doing of it. Whereas it is on the other hand a great failing, that all the Neighbourhood almoſt will agree to tell the ſtory of ſuch a Miniſters miſcarriages and ſins to one another, and indeed in all Companies; but few or none have the courage or faithfulneſs to report it to ſuch as may and would remedy it. What ſhall they become *Informers*? As if that were a worſe name then *Whiſperers* or *Backbiters*. Shall they peal upon their Miniſters? Yes certainly, this would be the greater Charity; yea, this might prove a Charity indeed; for this might wound his Soul in order to his cure, while the other only wounds his good Name incurably; this may be a means to Reform him, whilſt the other ſerves only to blaſt his Reputation, and perhaps hardens him in his ſin; this Anſwers all the ends of Diſcipline, and roles the guilt from your

your ſelves and the Church, whilſt the other doth but gratifie ſome naughty vile affection in your ſelves and ethers: In a word, this makes for the glory of God, the other only to your Miniſters defamation and diſcredit. Provided your Proof be plain, and there appear no Deſign but what is good and honeſt at the bottom, I dare ſay, that ſuch as preſide in the Government, will both right and thank you.

2. But if your Miniſters failings be only now and then, a being meerly *over-taken with a fault*, and comes under the head of ſins of infirmity; methinks love might cover them, and a *ſpirit of meekneſs* might by degrees cure them; ſoft Words might melt his heart; and good Exhortations proceeding from ſincere and unfeigned affection, joyned with your own pregnant Example, might gain him to God, and make him your Convert inſtead of your becoming his. Are we commanded to exerciſe this point of Charity to every Brother, and not to our Miniſter? Or do we judge or conculde *him* leſs ſenſible of our affection and tenderneſs, than a rude and illiterate Neighbour? Or is he the only Man in all the Pariſh to be deſpaired of, whom no ſweetneſs can oblige, and no warnings work upon? Sir, Give me leave to tell you, that till this like method be eſſayed, and that more than once or twice, to win him, you have not diſcharged your Duty to God or to him. Perhaps he is not ſo bad as he is painted, report may have wronged him, you know this Age is eaſie to believe any thing that makes againſt the Miniſtry in general; ſome ſtudy to find or to make faults where indeed there are none, others lay Temptations in their way purpoſely to make them fall, thinking by becoming privy to their failings, to make them fear to have the greater awe upon them, or to render them more pliant to all their politick ſecular Ends and Deſigns;

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at leaſt to juſtifie their own ſins by making them of the Company; or to ſilence the noiſe of their own guilty Conſciences, and ſalve their crazed Reputations, by appearing zealous for God and Goodneſs, in crying as loud as they can againſt them. Beſides Miniſters tell the People of their faults, and it is a kind of pleaſing revenge to ſome to find fault with them again. Nor muſt I forget their taking Tyth, which you know in this Sacrilegious Age is a moſt unpardonable crime, and a ſcandal ſufficient, that a Miniſter is a Gentleman and Rich, that he behaves himſelf like a Man, and will not diſfigure his face or effeminate his voice to humor a Party; who though they ſpoke a Miniſter never ſo holy, and never ſo powerful both in Life and Doctrine before, yet he forfeits all by keeping a Coach, or being made a Biſhop; which by the way, is a ſtrange confutation of that ſo much approved Doctrine of never falling from grace. Theſe Sir, are ſome of your own Obſervations in Diſcourſe betwixt you and I, and how often have I heard you ſay what Notice you have taken of ſome chief and leading Men in their Countrey, who have ſeemed never more delighted, at Market or ſuch like publick Meetings, then when they have fallen upon the Subject of reviling the Miniſtry? That Man being always the moſt welcome Companion, who could expoſe any of them moſt. Remember I beſeech you with what regret you have bewailed this thing to me, as a moſt unchriſtian and unſeemly Behaviour, as an infallible ſign of a moſt ulcerated rotten heart, and the effects of direct direful Atheiſm, void of all regard to God whoſe Miniſters they are, and void of common Civility or Chriſtian Charity, which ſhould teach them to hide, rather than with *Solomons* Character of a Fool, to *make a mock of ſin.* I am fully confident God will one day judge theſe jolly Men in earneſt,

earnest, for all that pastime they make of their poor Ministers infirmities, which are indeed rather matters of Humiliation and Mourning to Men, who are any whit under the sense and power of sincere godliness. I had not called these Passages to your memory at this present, was it not that I am exceeding jealous for you, lest any Practices of yours should give any countenance or encouragement, to such as set themselves thus in the *seat of the scornful.*

3. But let it be granted, that your Minister is indeed scandalous: Yet this in my Opinion will not warrant you, in your designed purpose of leaving his Ministry. For,

1. Since you are so much offended and grieved with the Errors of his sinful life, there is the less danger of infection, or getting any harm to your self, by what you observe and censure in him. Your Souls health I am perswaded, will never be impaired by those sins, which your Soul abhorreth: *Quibus mali placent in unione, ipsi communicant malis. Quibus vero mali displacent, & eos emendare non possunt, non factis eorum, sed Altari Christi Communicant.* Augustin. Epist. 162.

2. Since you say that your Minister is nevertheless a very excellent Preacher, which is not a thing impossible; I conceive your Wisdom and Duty is to distinguish betwixt the good and the bad, to put a difference betwixt his Doctrine and his Life; for Gifts and Grace you know Sir are two different things, and a Man may have Gifts for the edification of others, and yet want Grace for himself. St. *Augustin* I am sure makes a vast difference betwixt the visible Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and the invisible Grace of God, in his Controversy with the *Donatists* in this very Argument, as you shall see anon. And on *Matt.* 23. *Ideo audiuntur* (saith he) *utiliter*,

ter, qui etiam utiliter non agunt. And St. *Paul* ſuppoſeth that a Man may be a *Preacher unto others*, and yet *become a Caſt-away* himſelf, 1 *Cor.* 9. 27. We read in the Goſpel of an unfaithful and unjuſt Steward ſet over the Houſhold of God. It is further plain from *Luk.* 9. that *Judas* was ſent forth and commiſſioned with the reſt of Chriſts Diſciples. The holy Spirit chargeth the Biſhops of ſeveral of the Churches of *Aſia*, with ſundry heinous failings and ſins, and yet honoureth them with the glorious title of *Angels* of their reſpective Churches, *Rev.* 2. and 3. *Chap.* Yea our *Saviour* himſelf tells us *Mat.* 7. 22, 23. that many will be diſowned and condemned by him *as workers of Iniquity*, who yet *have propheſied, caſt out Devils, and done many wonderful Works in his Name.* From which it is plain that a graceleſs Perſon may have extraordinary gifts for the Work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt: Thoſe holy perſons, ſuch as *Zachary*, and *Simeon*, *Anna*, *Mary*, and *Joſeph*, continued all along in the Communion of the Church of the Jews, whoſe Rulers were ſo vile as to ſlay the Prophets, and to kill thoſe that were ſent unto them from God. Yea we find our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* frequently in the Temple, attending upon the Miniſtration of the High Prieſts on their Solemn Feaſts, though generally in thoſe days they came into their places by bribery, were very bad Men and not qualified as the Law of *Moſes* required. We read likewiſe that it was the manner of our *Saviour Chriſt*, to enter into the Synagogue every Sabbath day, to hear the Scribes and Phariſees read and expound the Law, whoſe wicked lives he nevertheleſs moſt vehemently inveighs againſt upon all occaſions. You ſhall furthermore find our *Bleſſed Lord*, beſides his own Example and Practice, to give Directions to his Diſciples and the Multitude,

titude, in the very Caſe which is before us, *Mat.* 23. 1, 2, 3. ſaying, *The Scribes and Phariſees ſit in* Moſes's *his Seat; all therefore* (mark that) *whatſoever they bid you obſerve, that obſerve and do; but do not ye after their Works, for they ſay and do not.* What, hear theſe whom thou haſt denounced ſo many bitter woes againſt, even woe upon woe in this very Chapter? What the *Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites*, thoſe *blind Guides, whited Sepulchers; Graves that appear not?* That *bind heavy burdens and grievous to be born, and lay them upon other Mens ſhoulders, but they themſelves will not move them with one of their fingers*; that *ſhut up the Kingdom of Heaven againſt Men*, that *neither go in themſelves, nor ſuffer them that are entring to go in*; that *devour Widows Houſes, and for a pretence make long Prayers*, &c. What, ſhall we that are thy Diſciples, and can hear ſuch a Heavenly Preacher as thou art, who ſpeakeſt *as never Man ſpake*, go to hear ſuch wretches as theſe? Yes, ſaith *Chriſt*, *They ſit in* Moſes's *Chair*, have the ſtamp of publick Warrant and Authority, therefore hear them: St. *Auguſtin* brings this Text of our *Saviour*, to prove the ſame Queſtion I am about, and to the ſame purpoſe. *Laicus enim qui vult bene vivere, cum attenderit Clericum malum, quid dicit? Dominus dixit: Quæ dicunt facite, quæ faciunt facere nolite. Ambulabo viam Domini, non ſequar iſtius mores; audiam ab illo, non verba ipſius ſed Dei. Sequar Deum, ſequatur ille cupiditatem ſuam.* Auguſtin. in Johan. c. 10. *Modo ea quæ ad Cathedram pertinent recta præcipiant*, ſaith St. *Hierom. Vult autem Dominis hunc ordinem Divinitus eſſe conſtitutum, ac proinde audiendam eſſe veritatem, etiam ex ore mercenariorum &*

hypocritarum doctorum; ſo the Learned Mr. *Beza* upon the Text. *Whereas the Prieſts were ſometimes ſimple, and ſometimes wicked Men, leſt any ſhould deſpiſe the Ordinance of God for their unworthineſs, the promiſe is made by God*, Numb. 6. 27. *And they ſhall put my Name upon the Children of* Iſrael, *and I will bleſs them*, ſaith Mr. *Amſworth*. Expoſitors all (all that ever I ſaw at leaſt) agree in this matter. I might alſo to ſtrengthen this, add the Teſtimony of the Ancient and other Modern Churches, but I ſhall content my ſelf with tranſcribing the 26th Article of the *Church of England*, ſaying, *Although in the viſible Church, the evil be ever mingled with the good, and ſometimes the evil have chief Authority in the Miniſtration of the Word and Sacraments: Yet, for as much as they do not the ſame in their own Name, but in Chriſts; and do Miniſter by his Commiſſion and Authority, we uſe their Miniſtry both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving the Sacraments: Neither is the effect of Chriſts Ordinances taken away by their wickedneſs, nor the grace of Gods gifts diminiſhed, from ſuch as by faith, and rightly do receive the Sacraments miniſtred unto them, which are effectual, becauſe of Chriſts inſtitution and promiſe; although they be miniſtred by evil Men.* To this Doctrine do all the beſt *Reformed Churches* agree, witneſs the *Harmony of their Confeſſions*: The contrary, unto which is the Doctrine of the *Papiſts*, and *Anabaptiſts*, and *Browniſts*, and *Family of Love*, with ſome others only of the moſt extravagant of the Diſſenting Parties, from the preſent eſtabliſhment. Our Lord Chriſt acknowledgeth the power even of *Pilate* over himſelf, and ſaith, *It was given him from above.*

If

If he be indeed your lawful Miniſter, ſent by them in Authority, and ſo ſettled by the Laws of the Land (as I know he is) this is interpretatively the Will of God, and your Duty ſeems to me to be plainly chalked out by the *Holy Apoſtle*; Heb. 13. 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit your ſelves: for they watch for your Souls, as they that muſt give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.* So alſo 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 12, 13. *And we beſeech you, Brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admoniſh you; and to eſteem them very highly for their work ſake.* Again, 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. *Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double Honour, eſpecially they who labour in the Word and Doctrine:* But if ill, honour them nevertheleſs as Rulers, not only in point of Maintenance, but Eſteem, for ſo I conceive we may infer from the Text. Honour them for Gods ſake, as ſet over you in the Lord; for their Work ſake, as Watching for your Souls; for their Character ſake, as Elders and Rulers; for their Doom ſake, that they may be able to make *their Account with joy, and not with grief*, and for your own ſake, leſt the contrary Practice be *unprofitable for you.* For the Ordinances are Gods, their Efficacy is from God, and your Service herein is done to God, on purpoſe to confound all glorying in Man. St. *Paul* ſpeaks of ſome that *preached Chriſt out of envy, with purpoſe to add Affliction to his bonds*; Phil. 1. 15, 16, 17, &c. (who therefore muſt certainly be very bad men) yet ſince *Chriſt was preached, he therein did rejoyce, yea, and would rejoyce.* You do not think that the Morning and Evening Sacrifices under the Law were to be neglected, becauſe of the ſinfulneſs of

Elies Sons, or that their wickedneſs gave warrant to the people *to abhor the Offerings of the Lord.* St. *Paul* taxeth the *Corinthians*, for manifold Enormities and Sins in the receiving of the Lords Supper. And it is not unlikely, but the Miniſters might ſhare too much with the People in thoſe failings which were ſo prevailing and general; yet all his Arguments tend to the better qualifying themſelves to become more worthy Receivers: but by no means in the leaſt to the exempting them from that moſt neceſſary and moſt indiſpenſible Duty. I know you will ſay, you plead not to be excuſed from the Ordinances, but only for a liberty to hear ſome body elſe. But then, Sir, what becomes of that mutual Relation betwixt a Paſtor and his People, and of that mutual Obligation of Duty of each towards other? *How ſhall they hear without a Preacher?* ſaith St. *Paul.* And how ſhall they preach without Hearers? ſay I.

But you will again ſay, That ſome body will hear him if you do not; to which I reply, If your Principle be good and true, they ought not; and if the reſt follow your Example, who are a leading Man in the Pariſh, they will not.

Whence it follows, that the People are at liberty to go to whom and where they liſt, while the ſame Man, as you and I have known, ſhall leave the *Church* of *England* to go to the *Preſbyterians*, from thence to the *Independants*, thence to the *Anabaptiſts*, next to the *Quakers*, and at laſt caſt off all regard to the Worſhip of God. So true is that ſaying, *That Toleration in one Age is Atheiſm in the next, if not in the very ſame*; or that, *That the firſt ſtep to Apoſtacy is the forſaking of Publick Aſſemblies.*

Conſider-

Conſidering all which, I am confident, all the worſt of Inconveniences from a Miniſter that is a bad Liver and yet teacheth well, are not worthy to be put in the Ballance with thoſe ſad and diſmal ones above-named, to which more might be added.

But, Sir, I am further to beſeech you to weigh ſeriouſly and without prejudice theſe following Conſiderations, with reſpect to the publick as well as to your ſelf.

1. That upon this very ſame Principle, that you think of leaving your Paſtor upon and his Communion, *viz.* Becauſe he is a wicked ſinful Liver; did *Donatus* found that lamentable and woful Schiſm, which did create ſo much diſturbance and miſery to the Church of Chriſt in St. *Auguſtine's* time, and a long time after, I had almoſt ſaid ever ſince. And as it began in a ſad Schiſm, and was accompanied with manifold grievous Hereſies in the Church; ſo it went on with Commotions and Rebellions in the State: *Donatus* and his Faction, as they grew in power, denying Obedience and Conformity to the Publick Laws, upon the account that they were made and adminiſtred by wicked Men.

I would undertake for the truth of this ſad Example in each particular, if I thought that you either knew it not, or were ſo hardy as to deny it. But we need not look back ſo far, for it was this very Principle, which firſt ſet on foot, and after brought to paſs thoſe Barbarities, Outrages, and bloody Executions in *Germany* of later days. And in truth, that Doctrine which blew the Trumpet to our lamentable and unhappy Commotions here in *England*, both in Church and State. For Firſt, they began (as you well know) to traduce the *Biſhops* and whole *Clergy* as moſt ſinful and wicked

wicked Men, calling them *Idol*, *Idle Shepherds*; *dumb Dogs*; *ſwearing*, *drunken*, *unclean Prieſts*; *Incarnate Devils*, *Cogging*, *Cozening Knaves*; *Deſperate*, *formal Atheiſts*; *Robbers*, *Wolves*, &c. for the ſad Truth of all which with a great deal more, I need only to turn you to their publick Sermons, Libels, and *Centuries* which are now in Print, and ſome of which, even the moſt invective, have been lately re-printed.

Next, for the good King and his Government in the State; His *Sacred Majeſty King Charles the Firſt* was ſo ſenſible of the like hard Speeches and Prints, as he himſelf ſaith, *The worſt Effects of open Hoſtility came ſhort of thoſe deſigns: for I can more willingly loſe my Crown than my Credit, nor are my Kingdoms ſo dear to me, as my Reputation and Honour.* Again, *Theſe foul and falſe Aſperſions, were ſecret Engines at firſt employed againſt my peoples love of me, that undermining their Opinion and Value of me, my Enemies and theirs too, might at once blow up their Affections, and batter their Loyalty.*

Thus this Principle hatched up the Covenant for Reformation and more pure Religion, as was pretended, and that fed and maintained that long and bloody Civil War, which ended in the Ruin of *King* and *Laws*, *Religion* and *Church*, for a time. I had not revived the memory of theſe ſaid Truths, had it not been neceſſary to ſhew you what bad uſe deſigning Men make of this bad Principle; how under the appearance of Zeal againſt Sin and Jealouſie for God and his Glory, it carries them to all violation of Sacred Duty, and expoſeth all Perſons and Things that are Sacred, to all ſorts of moſt ungodly Outrages and Villanies; ſo eaſie a thing is it to find faults, and make Offenders, when partiality and prejudice

dice come to ſit upon the Bench, God help the Innocent.

Donatus and his Party, after his Example, refuſed Communion with *Cæcilianus* then *Biſhop of Carthage*, becauſe he was as they ſaid a *Traditor* (*i. e.* had in times of Perſecution delivered up the Bible to be burnt) denying therefore to hear him preach, or to receive the Sacraments at his hands. But when after a full hearing before *Conſtantine the Great*, together with a great number of Biſhops for that purpoſe aſſembled, he was purged from the Slander, and declared guiltleſs; then *Donatus* and his Faction ſaid, he had been ordained by *Felix* who was a *Traditor*; therefore his Ordination was null and void, and this is made guilt enough to juſtifie their defection.

Pope Hildebrand Decreed and Commanded, *That no man ſhould hear Maſs from the mouth of a Prieſt that had a Wife.*

The *Rhemiſts* further ſay, *That the Sermons of Hereticks* (and ſo they term all Proteſtants) *muſt not be heard though they preach the Truth; their Prayers and Sacraments are not acceptable to God, but are the howlings of Wolves.*

And our Modern Diſſenters will teach you, That if a Miniſter conform to the Laws of the Church, and read the Common Prayer, he is alſo not to be heard, or the Sacraments received from him.

At this rate, Sir, who is Innocent? Whither will you go? Who ſhall be your Paſtor? Or will you have none? At this rate you may ſeparate and ſeparate from all the Churches, and from all the Men in the World, till you come to abhor your own *dear ſelf*; for what Man is there that lives and is not a great Sinner? And ſure I am, you would be loth that your Wife, and Children,

and

and Servants ſhould rebound this Argument upon you, and plead Exemption from their known reſpective Duties, upon the pretence that you are a ſinful Man: for if you rightly conſider it, the dint of the Argument will hold good againſt Parents and Maſters of Families, as well as againſt Magiſtrates and Miniſters, and then farewel all Order and Government in the World.

No, Sir, Government is a Sacred thing, and an Ordinance of God, and ſo are Governours as ſuch, whatſoever they are in their private, perſonal capacity. And was I to give account in ſhort, of that ſhameful diſobedience and ſtubborneſs in Children; that perverſeneſs, ſelf-will, and unfaithfulneſs in Servants, generally complained of by Parents and Maſters of Families at this day, I ſhould aſcribe it to the want of that reverence and regard, which God expects from us, towards them that Rule over us both in Church and State. Men may read their Sin in their Puniſhment, while their Conſciences will tell them, that they are but paid in their own kind, meaſure for meaſure; and that they have furniſhed their Children and Servants with Proofs and Examples againſt themſelves.

2. Next to the publick Security, I muſt offer to you the Conſideration of your private peace, which is in danger to be loſt by ſuch raſh defiance to your Miniſter.

For the Laws are on his ſide, as long as he performs his Duty according as they have Enacted; and if he be either a man of Stomach, or ſhall think himſelf bound to put the Laws in force againſt you, this will make your life uneaſie to you, will ſowre your temper otherwiſe never ſo ſweet; will ruffle your Spirit, ſtir up all your paſſions, and at laſt provoke you moſt inſenſibly,

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to ſome Indecencies againſt him both in Word and Deed.

And let me tell you, Sir, you will certainly find it a moſt uncomfortable thing to live at variance with your Paſtor, a vexation like to that which the *Wiſe Man* calls a *Continual Dropping*. Beſides that, it will mightily prejudice you againſt all his Doctrines, though never ſo ſound and good, as often as you ſhall hear him. For it is neceſſary the Word be *received with meekneſs*, or elſe it will never profit you, ſince *the wrath of Man cannot work the righteouſneſs of God*. It will prejudice you againſt his Perſon, prejudice you againſt his very Name and Mention; it will ſo every way prejudice the preſent healthful Conſtitution of your own Soul, as inſtead of Cure, you will unavoidably fall into thoſe Diſeaſes which you ſeek to prevent. Not to ſay any thing of what hazard your Eſtate may run in a Caſe which ſo nearly concerns your Soul: for in my moſt deliberate thoughts, I had rather you ſhould quit your preſent Station, as pleaſant as it is, and in the ſtrength of *Abrahams* Faith, ſeek a *Land of Promiſe* and Bleſſing from God, than live where you do at variance with your Miniſter, which hath neither Promiſe nor Bleſſing belonging to it.

3. It is alſo matter of diſcredit in the Eye of the World: for men are not yet ſo wholly devoid of all reſpect to God, but they will in heart bear ſome ſecret regard to their Miniſter for Gods ſake, and to his Office, for either love or fear of Laws and Government under which he ſerveth.

Theſe things have a great awe over the Minds and Conſciences of Men, and carry ſuch a ſtrange unac-

countable ſway with them, as you muſt be a Man of extraordinary Credit and Influence, not to ſay Confidence, to think to over-bear them. Such hath been the conſtant Reverence, and ſo great, which the meer light of Nature hath taught the worſt of Heathens to ſhew and expreſs towards the Miniſters of their Idol gods; which is certainly much rather due to ſuch as miniſter at the Altar of the only Great and True God. *Fear the Lord with all thy Soul* (ſaith the Son of *Syrac*, Eccleſiaſticus 7. 29.) *and reverence his Prieſts. Fear the Lord, and Honour the Prieſt*; ver. 30. It is alſo a Wiſe Rule which the ſame Author lays down *Chap.* 19. v. 8, 9. Saying, *Whether it be to a friend or foe, talk not of other Mens lives, and if thou canſt without offence, reveal them not, for he heard and obſerved thee, and when time cometh, he will hate thee.* When St. *Paul* had unadviſedly reviled *Ananias* that moſt corrupt and wicked High Prieſt, he corrects himſelf, ſaying, *I wiſt not, Brethren, that he was the High Prieſt; for it is written, Thou ſhalt not ſpeak evil of the Ruler of thy people*; Acts 23. 4, 5.

4. I might alſo preſs the conſideration of that ill uſe which the more ignorant or more wicked in your Town and Neighbourhood would make of your Example, to wander at large like *Sheep without a Shepherd*; or to ſtay at home and go no where, or to keep the Sabbath at the Tavern or Ale-houſe, inſtead of Feaſting together at the Table of the Lord: together with thoſe ſad conſequences to your own Family, while you it may be go one way, and your Wife another, and your Children and Servants pretend to Worſhip each and all of them in a way by themſelves; to the gradual ruin of all Peace and Piety in your Family, in the room of mutual

tual Edification and Comfort. But I know a word to the Wiſe is ſufficient, and I am minded to have done.

Wherefore, Sir, were I worthy to be liſtened to, I would adviſe you ſhould abide in the Station wherein God hath placed you, ſitting down with quiet and thankfulneſs under the uſe of ſuch means as his gracious Providence hath afforded you; doing your own Duty to God, in a conſtant diligent Attendance upon his publick Ordinances, and to your lawful Miniſter for the ſake of God. You may countenance him in his Office, and yet diſcourage him in his Sins. The worſe he is, pray the more for him, and talk leſs againſt him, but take more pains with him to recover him; and if nothing will do, wait with patience till God put you under ſome milder and more comfortable Diſpenſation, by removing him one way or other from amongſt you, and ſending you a better in his place. Which thing I am confident God will do for you in his good time, if he ſee you thus to deny your ſelf, in meer obedience to him, by caſting your ſelf and cauſe upon him, and wholly referring it to him; free from all indirect projects and practices of your own, which may argue your being diſſatisfied with the preſent proviſion which he hath made.

In the mean while, if you edifie by your Miniſter in nothing elſe, this exerciſe of Faith, and Patience, and Meekneſs, and Love, and Unity, and Uniformity, will become far better Evidence of your real Edification and growth in Grace, than any you will be able to produce in the contrary courſe. For whoever they

be that miniſter to your Luſts or Paſſions, or meerly to a Party, will never miniſter truly to your Edification. And indeed woe to this preſent World, that Mens growth in Grace ſhould be meaſured by their heats and contentions about indifferent things, by being ready to quarrel at the times, and to arraign the actions of Superiors, and Governours in Church and State, by being always complaining of the miſcarriages of other Men, but eſpecially Miniſters; as if all the title Men had to vertue in themſelves, conſiſted in a certain delight which they took, in repeating and proclaiming other Mens vices: which is ſuch a kind of Edifying as Infernal Spirits boaſt of, and which is indeed only proper to the Accuſer of the Brethren, did Men rightly conſider it. *Where envy and ſtrife is*, ſaith the *holy Apoſtle*, Jam. 3. 16. *there is confuſion and every evil work*; as alſo that this ſort of *Wiſdome* is from beneath, even *earthly, ſenſual, deviliſh*, v. 15.

Becauſe I fore-ſee and know the Conſequences of theſe things, both in reference to the publick, and your private Peace, to the rending the Church and your own Soul aſunder, I am therefore concerned to warn you againſt every thing that hath but a neceſſary appearance or tendency thereunto, as much as againſt all inclinations or tendencies to Drunkenneſs, or Adultery, or Stealing, or Forſwearing your ſelf, and the like.

For a Concluſion, Let me remind you of the Advice of the *Bleſſed* St. *Paul* to the *Corinthians* in the like Caſe, where one was *for* Paul, *another for* Apollo, *and another for* Cephas, and all were in

in that reſpect, and therefore *carnal*) ſaying, *I have in a Figure transferred theſe things, to my ſelf and to* Apollo *for your ſakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of Men above that which is written, that no one of you be puft up for one againſt another: Therefore let no Man glory in Men*: 1 Cor. 4. 6.

And here Sir, I had concluded your trouble in reading theſe Lines (having already tranſgreſſed the Lines of an Epiſtle) did I not fear you might fancy I had ſome Deſign in writing ſome of theſe at leaſt, to make an Apology for the ſinfulneſs of Miniſters Lives, which God forbid; and my comfort is, that you know me better. But leſt any may hereafter become privy to theſe Papers, who may be inclined by Intereſt, Party, or Prejudice, to Judge ſo hardly; I think it therefore needful to add, that I abhor all Debauchery and Ungodlineſs in any Man, but moſt of all in a Miniſter, who hath ſo ſolemnly Conſecrated, not only his mouth, but his whole Self, Soul and Body unto God; ſo that to deſecrate or unhallow either, is an high point of Sacriledge againſt God, and a moſt grievous Scandal to the World; while all good Men are afflicted to ſee it, and all bad Men are hardned in their wicked Courſes by it. While the poor wretch in all his Preachings playeth but the Orator againſt himſelf, and each good Sermon which he makes, is but a freſh Inditement of his old wicked life. No, no, I wiſh from my heart, that every Miniſter in his reſpective place, was as St. *Paul* for his *Converſation in Heaven*, and an *Apollos* for his Eloquence in the Pulpit; that he was furniſhed with both a Mouth and Wiſdome, which Gain-ſayers were not able to contradict: I mean in few words, that he was him-

himſelf a living Word. This would be a means to heal our diviſions, and make up thoſe breaches amongſt us, which the ſins of both Preachers and Hearers keep open; and in Gods good time help to make us *of one heart and of one mind.* Amen.

Though my own ſad Obſervation for the preſent, gives me to ſee that as yet this alone will not do it; For as much as it is too too manifeſt and plain, that in ſuch places where the Miniſters live every way exemplary and blameleſs, and are ſound, laborious, and faithful in their Preaching; yet even in thoſe places the Breaches are kept open, and the Separation continued. Whence I cannot but conclude there is ſomething elſe at the bottom, beſides the pretence to Religion and Reformation, which keeps men from their Duty, and at that diſtance one from the other: But the making *Men of one mind in an Houſe*, as well as the working effectual grace in *Mans* heart, is a Diſpenſation beyond the reach and power of *Man*, and indeed is the only Prerogative of God, who ſeems to me to have reſerved this ſo great a Bleſſing, and ſo much to be deſired, for another World, or ſome other Age of this: In the mean time it is a great comfort that you and I have got thus far on our Journey, toward our longed for reſt, in ſo much Proſperity and Peace, free and ſecure from all thoſe amazing, ſtaggering temptations of the Primitive Chriſtians; under the good Providence of God, and gracious Protection and Sun-ſhine of mild, and moſt merciful Governours, whom God of his goodneſs yet preſerve, notwithſtanding all our frowardneſs and unthankfulneſs;

neſs. That I may make good the Argument my ſubject Matter exacts from me, The lawfulneſs of attending on the Miniſtry of a vicious and ſcandalous Clergy Man, I ſhall endeavour to give an Account of, and Satisfaction in theſe Two particulars.

1. What conſtitutes, and is neceſſary to a lawful Miniſter.

2. Whether ſuppoſing him Vicious and Scandalous, it can either null his Office, or take away the Vertue, Efficacy, and Succeſs of his Miniſtration; and if I ſhould prove it cannot do either of theſe, the Argument will hold good.

1. I ſhall give you a juſt Account of a lawful Miniſter, we ſuppoſe him a Perſon learned and accompliſhed with Arts and Sciences, one that hath taken ſome Degrees, and by conſequence performed the Exerciſes required by the Statutes of the *Colledge* and *Univerſity* he related to, and that came from thence with a ſufficient reputation for Learning and Morality; then had given to him at his leaving that place of his Education, a Teſtimonial concerning his improvment in Learning and other Endowments; thus recommended either by Perſons of Integrity and known Conduct in the *Colledge*, or afterwards by thoſe *Clergy Men* in or near the place of his future Reſidence, concering their knowledge of his Learning and Ability, deſigning the Office of a *Deacon*, he is after ſtrict Examination (as Practiſed by my Lord of *London*, and thoſe by him choſen for ſo important a work) I wiſh the like care had been taken by other *Dioceſans*; he is I ſay ordained, and upon trial and hopes of his daily Progreſs in the ſtudy of the Scriptures, and giving himſelf to Prayer and Reading, admitted a Canditate for the honourable Calling of the Miniſtry and to the Cure of Souls. Now

before we proceed, I demand if ſuch a Perſon does not anſwer the things teſtified, and Character given on his behalf, whether the *Biſhop* deſerves any Cenſure, or they that were forward to venture their Reputation, and expoſe their Judgment by a raſh and undue Subſcription, to what in their Conſciences they had reaſon to ſuſpect the Truth of: And perhaps in the common Vogue and Opinion of many, who were better acquainted, and more intimately converſant with him, the Novice could not deſerve, or had he his merit, have preſumed to obtain. And here I might juſtly caution thoſe of good eſteem and dignity in the Church, not to be perſwaded by others, or obliged by any importunate Friend, or warm Solicitations, to certifie or ſpeak in the behalf of any Scholar, of whom they have no particular knowledge, but comes re-commended by ſome Relation, great Perſon, or Acquaintance at the ſecond or third hand, and ſo perhaps crept into their little and ſlender Notice: How too common, and confirmed by ſad inſtances, this Practice hath been, is ſufficiently known: But that I am concerned at preſent to do, is to ſhew you not ſo much the care, that is and ought be uſed to prevent an illiterate and immoral Perſon from entring into Orders, and being capable of taking on him the cure of Souls, but rather to let you know, what are the Qualifications that conſtitute a Miniſter, and what your Behaviour towards ſuch a one muſt be?

His Office in the Church, is derived from Chriſt, who is Head and King of the Body and Society, by him choſen and deſigned to maintain his Truth, and keep up Order and Government amongſt each Member; and this Sacred and Divine Inſtitution of a Miniſtry; and ſuch a Society bear relation one to another, and by leſſening and taking away one, we ſubvert and deſtroy the other.

And

And I wiſh to God that all Chriſtian People, much more they that undertake to miniſter at Gods Altar, and ſerve in ſo honourable and important a Calling, were in offenſive and really holy, and thereby an Ornament to their Religion and Calling. I know many can ſee our Actions, and are witneſſes of our Converſations, and may be either ſilent or convinc'd by the goodneſs of both, that either do not mind or underſtand our Doctrine and Diſcourſes: And however looſe and extravagant they themſelves are, yet they expect (as juſtly they may) a conformity in our lives to the Rules and Precepts we recommend to others; therefore I am ſo far from thinking a good and vertuous life not neceſſary to a Miniſter, that I know St. *Paul* labours much to enforce it in his Epiſt. to *Timothy*: But the Queſtion before us is this, in caſe the Guide and Conductor of Souls is deficient and negligent in the government of himſelf if it may juſtifie my declining to do my Duty, and non-attendance on his Miniſtry, is therefore I find to conſtitute a true and lawful Miniſtry, Two Things are requiſite.

1. Preaching wholſome and ſound Doctrine.
2. Due and right Adminiſtration of the Sacraments.

I may add a Third, His ſolemn and publick Praying for the People, without which we can hope for little benefit from the other.

1. He muſt teach and inſtruct the People, and be apt and ready in ſo doing; one that is able to explain and give the ſenſe of Scripture, and to duly apply it; not only inform the Judgment, but work upon, raiſe and warm the Affections, though that is the main and chief, yet this is a neceſſary and conſequential work: And for both theſe, a Man of a careleſs and looſe life may be (as ſome I have heard of) ſufficiently qualified, and he may ſhew another the right way to a place, and warmly

excite his care and progreſs, warn him of miſtake and wandrings, dangers and difficulties; I may add demonſtrate the pleaſure and advantage of chooſing it, and perſevering, that moves not one ſtep himſelf; and he may hereby be of great Uſe, and do much Service to another, both by direction and encouragment, that is too remiſs and careleſs of theſe things himſelf, as St. *Paul* exhorts the Miniſter to take heed to his Doctrine, ſo ſhould the hearers eſpecially mind the Matter and Importance of the things ſpoken, and in Gods Name delivered. Now if (Sir,) your Miniſter ſtudies and delivers Truth, and hath Commiſſion and Authority for ſo doing, and is able in Scripture, Knowledge, and Rational Demonſtration, and you are, as you pretend, deſirous to know, and a Lover of the Truth, why ſhould you not without a prejudic'd and ſquemiſh Appetite, receive and entertain good and wholeſom Counſel, tho not given by a hand or mouth of your own chooſing. This St. *Paul* calls ὀρθοτομοῦντα τὸν λόγον τῆς ἀληθείας rightly dividing the Word of Truth; and our Saviour giving every one his dimenſum in due Seaſon; is it not poſſible and ordinary for Men to have great meaſures and degrees of Reaſon. An excellent way of Arguing, and ſtrong inſinuation and perſwaſion, and other acquired and natural Abilities, that are not indued and tinctured with a Heavenly Impreſſion and Divine Grace? And if what is delivered and re-comended to you, is agreeable to Gods Word, and apt to confirm and improve your knowledge and faith, to take you off from a miſtake and error you have fallen into and imbibed, to direct you to ſteer by a better Compaſs, and direct your courſe into ways more ſafe and pleaſant: If your Miniſter takes care to inform your Judgment, and furniſh your Mind with ſubſtantial Truth, and directs you by well doing, to adorn your Maſter and Religion,

and

and ſecure peace and happineſs to your Soul: And all this he may do (however failing in an Examplary Piety) Why may not you bleſs God for giving him ſuch good Parts and degrees of Knowledge, which you may really make an advantage to your ſelf ſelf of, and not repine and quarrel at his neglect of that which I confeſs would be of much more advantage to him, but I think cannot tend ſo immediately to your good: If your Prieſts Lips preſerve and impart knowledge, you are obliged to ſeek and receive it thence; if he tels us it is (and we find it the Word and Writing of God) and dictated by his Spirit, we muſt attend and obey. Men are but the hand and inſtruments by which it is delivered down, and conveyed to our underſtanding and obedience, thro earthen and brittle, and ſometimes in unclean and poluted Veſſels, the Heavenly Treaſures of Divine Wiſdom and Knowledge may be tranſmitted to us; and if this is one part of the Miniſterial Work and Office, and that an ill Man may attain an excellency, and be uſeful to the Church of God in; and Inſtruction and Edification in Truth and Righteouſneſs are every private Chriſtians Duty, and main Work, as to this part, you may ſatisfie your ſelf in hearing ſuch a Perſon, for you keep in your proper ſtation, and under means by God appointed; therefore may expect a bleſſing and ſucceſs in thus doing.

2. Another part of the Miniſterial Office, is a due and right Adminiſtration of the Sacraments. I would have you conſider whether there is any thing requiſite in the Adminiſtration of either Baptiſme or the Lords Supper, as to matter, or form and manner, that cannot be performed according to Chrſts inſtitution, by a Scandalous and Looſe Perſon if otherwiſe impowered and qualified; for we miſtake and leſſen both the nature and

and vertue of a Sacrament, if we think the efficacy and influence of the Adminiſtration, or benefit of the receptive Party, depends on the Perſon officiating: doubtleſs 'tis the grace and ſpirit of God, co-operating and concurring with theſe external Offices, that gives a bleſſing and ſucceſs to them. *Paul* may plant, and *Apollo* water, but God giveth the increaſe, ſays the moſt eminent, faithful and diligent *Apoſtle*. A due obſervance of the rule and method of our Saviour preſcribed is the Miniſters care and duty; and the Biſhops are particularly to inſpect their punctual obſervation of them. But a Miniſter as ſuch hath a Right and Charge, not only to Preach the Word, but of conſecrating the Elements, and ſeparating things before common, for the ſignification and obſignation of heavenly and ſpiritual bleſſings: But the efficacy and donation belong to, and is the peculiar prerogative of the Founder and King, that ordained and appointed theſe outward means and inſtruments for ſo great and ſacred Purpoſes; and all that he does or can pretend to, is as an inſtrumental and ſubſervient Cauſe, under Chriſt the great ſupream and ſole original and efficient cauſe of all divine grace and vertue. The Word by the Miniſter taught, may bring a fooliſh and unthinking triffle to ſober and ſerious thoughts; thoſe may, if cheriſht and followed, work a real and moral change, and make the Man live and act more conſiſtently with himſelf; bring him to improve and exerciſe his reaſon and faculties, mind the beſt things, by degrees ſlight and diſcard his looſe and idle Companions; and ſhall we ſay all this (tho much of it might be) was an effect of the bare Preaching the Word, and the ſinners making a better uſe of his Reaſon and noble Faculties, than formerly he had done, and not rather from Gods bleſſing and aſſiſtance attending and working by

by thoſe means; and in like manner, that Baptiſme when duly adminiſtred, is a means of inward regeneration, and waſhing away the pollution derived from the Parent on the infants Soul, tho it may and does work as a Sacrament ought, and as far as in reaſon it can do, yet the Author both of that Inſtitution and its Efficacy, as to its end, is God, and from him alone; and if ſo, then although God expects apt and ſuitable inſtruments, yet I ſuppoſe the unfitneſs and indecorum of thoſe, cannot obſtruct and prevent Gods working and effecting his end; if ſo, the Caſe of many Infants was very deplorable. While an unclean hand ſprinkles the Water, and an impure mouth declares the form of Baptiſm, the ſpirit and power of Chriſt may inwardly regenerate and purifie the Infant, and form the divine Nature and a good Diſpoſition in the mind, and hereby they become actual Members of the Church of Chriſt. They have right to the Promiſes of forgiveneſs of ſins, and by the Holy Ghoſt, are the adopted Children of God, and are viſibly ſigned and ſealed for ſuch, and implanted into Chriſts Body. And our Church in the 26th Article, declares her mind fully to this purpoſe, Although in the viſible Church the evil be mingled with the good, and ſometime the evil have chief Authority in the Miniſtration of the Word and Sacraments, yet for as much as they do not the ſame in their own Name, but in Chriſts, and do Miniſter by his Commiſſion and Authority, we may uſe their Miniſtry both in hearing the Word of God, and in receiving of the Sacraments; neither (to our purpoſe) is the effect of Chriſts Ordinance taken away by their wickedneſs, nor the grace of Gods gifts diminiſhed from ſuch as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments miniſtred unto them; which be effectual, becauſe of Chriſts inſtitution and promiſe, although they be miniſtred by evil Men.

So

So you ſee however uncouth and improbable my Aſſertion ſeems, yet it is not only the Opinion, but Doctrine of our Church I am vindicating; and to conclude, the Sacraments are good, and may do the receiver good, and give him inward peace and comfort; tho he that adminiſters remain bad, and no real advantage redounds to his own Soul.

This I could further make good from the Conſideration of,

1. That common and true ſaying amongſt you, *Viz.* That God is not tyed up, or limited to means, though I find both in the old and new *Teſtament* he directs to, and obliges Men, the ſtrict and punctual obſervation of his Inſtitutions; if it were (however improbable the Matter commanded may ſeem to be to attain the end) left to Mans liberty, either to comply with, or ommit what we have poſitive command, for then in time Mans fancy and ſentiments, their inclination, cuſtoms and intereſt, however different and many times contrary, would govern their Adreſſes to God, and become either an inſtance or part of divine Worſhip, which is abſur'd.

Becauſe 1. This would be a derogation to, and impeachment of divine Wiſdom, which hath not only required the worſhip and homage of Mankind, but directed them in the apteſt and moſt becoming way of applying themſelves to him. And I think nothing can be more reaſonable conſidering eſpeciallyhow ſtrangely miſtaken and benighted thoſe have been, to whom God hath not vouchſafed a Revelation of his Will? What groſs and palpable Errors they have fallen into? And what vacious and unbecoming Ways and Artifices they have made uſe of, to propitiate and atone the divine Majeſty? What amaze and huricane they have been bewilded in. I ſay, theſe fatal and inevitable miſchiefs, and infinitely more attending thoſe who

who are deſtitute of divine Revelation; being conſidered, it would reflect on the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, to leave Men in a matter of ſo great moment, to chooſe and act at random and uncertainties, one in this way and manner, and another in that, and few agreeing in the method of their Adoration, or being able to give any tollerable Reaſon of what they do; but are meerly led by Fancy, Humour, Intereſt or Education, or which is as uncertain and idle, the Tradition and Practice of their Fore-fathers; all which demonſtrate the neceſſity of Gods directing Men to the means and method of their Devotion.

2. It would alſo tend to great confuſion and diſorder in Divine Worſhip, and there would be as many pretended Religions as there are Sects and prevailing Parties in the World, and moſt would create, for an inſtance of Divine Worſhip, either an Idol of their own hearts, or the operation and figure of their own hands, and fall down before it; and ſuch a variety and innumerable ways of paying Divine Homage conſidered, and the heat and fiery zeal of Men for their own way and opinion allowed, infinite deſtraction, if not ſubverſion, of Civil Order and Government muſt be the Product. Now God being the Author of Order and not Confuſion, and as another *Apoſtle* ſays, *Where envying and ſtrife is, there is confuſion*, or tumults and unquietneſs, *and every evil Work*. It hence is clear and evident for prevention of theſe inconveniences and miſchiefs, that its very neceſſary that Almighty God, for the order and ſecurity of Humane Societies and ſupport of Government, ſhould direct Men, not only in the matter and end, but manner of Religious Worſhip, and preſcribe how we ought acceptably to addreſs our ſelves to him: Now having ſhewed the neceſſity, and therefore maintained the reputation of all inſtances of Worſhip of Divine Order and Inſtitution, and by conſequence our obligation to obſerve and adhere to

 them,

them, it will be reasonable to put these three things together: 1. That Almighty God in his working on the minds of Men, is not tyed up to means; yet 2. Those by him prescribed, do bind and oblige our constant use and attendance, not only as an act of our fealty and obedience, which as *Creatures* and *Dependants* we owe to God, but from the absurdity of the contrary supposition and practice, as 1. Its a derogation to, and impeachment of the Wisdom of God, and as 2. It would introduce great confusion and disorder both in Church and State, in Ecclesiastical and Civil Government, and in time subvert both. Now the Case as to Receiving the holy Sacrament from a Vicious, and in your Opinion Scandalous Person, stands thus, and from what I have premised, the plain inference must be this, You acknowledging that God who can by the prerogative of his grace, dispence benefits without, and no way stands in need of means, whereby to accomplish the designed end; yet having appointed apt and proper means, and promised a Blessing to the prudent and constant attendance on them, every Person which rationally expects the benefits promised at the Sacrament, stands indispensably obliged to the use and improvement of those appointed Methods and instruments; for as *Alensis* saith, the Minister is not *Dominus, sed Dispensator Sacramentorum*, he acts not by his own Commission and Authority, but in subordination to the holy Jesus, and as a Steward of the Mysteries of God; for if the Sacraments operated barely according to the worthiness and intention of the Person giving, and not rather as the Person receiving is prepared and disposed, the best of Christians might be defeated of the end and advantage of the *Sacrament*: because as he admits to the holy Table, so he absolves and gives the Seal of the Covenant conditionally and ministerially; and that I may give what satisfaction may reasonably be expected

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in this particular, I shall give you the serious consideration of these Three following Particulars.

1. Shew you from the nature of this Sacrament of the Lords Supper, that a Man not so fit and qualified as you desire, and the Church of which he is a Minister requires in her Canons and Constitution, yet cannot render this divine and heavenly institution and Feast ineffectual to you.

2. From the Person that administers.

3. The care and direction of the Church for the choice of fit and deserving Persons to minister in holy things, and upon due proof of their Loose and Scandalous Lives, for removing and suspending them from that holy Function.

1. What is the Nature of the holy Supper? Is't not requisite to tell you it was ordained and instituted by the Lord Jesus, both by positive Command and Right, and also as a promise and tender of spiritual good to the Soul of the *Communicant*. As to the former, its implied and the import of those words of our Saviour, which the Person that administers (however otherwise indisposed) may perform and imitate, *Take, eat, drink ye all of this* (as its in the holy Gospel.) This is the Mandatory part and warrant for our so doing, the Promisory is contained in those words, *This is my Body which was given for you, this Cup is the Blood of the* New Testament, *which was shed for many for the remission of sins*. And we have besides these, the *Example* of our *Lord*, *He took Bread, blessed it and broke it*, and also the Cup, and said, *This is my Body which was broken, and my Blood which was shed for you*. This was the sacred use and end of this holy and blessed *Sacrament*, and to be thus administred as a remembrance of Christs death and conveyance of the benefits obtained by it to the Worlds end. Now this being of divine appointment, intended to convey spiritual good, and

give us a visible Sign and Seal of that inward and spiritual grace, hath a relation according to the nature of Seals, to a certain Promise or Covenant supposed to be made between *God* and the *Persons* communicating, and may imply the mutual consent of both Parties. For at this time we come on our part to ratifie and renew our Baptismal promise, and in the very act of receiving, solemnly resign and dedicate our selves to *God*: and this being often repeated, it does strike a greater sense and awe of God, and makes a deeper impression upon the mind of the Receiver; and he that hath his thoughts thus raised to, and fixt upon the Holy *Jesus*, and is sensible of, and intent on the end and design of his sufferings, will find entertainment and delight enough to take away all lesser, and to him unavoidable failures, of which he can be supposed as little guilty as able to prevent. But I need not say more as to the *Sacrament* it self.

2. Let's also consider the *Person* that hath power and right of *Administration*, He must be, and so you account your *Minister*, a Person admitted to holy Orders, one lawfully, and by Episcopal power ordained, and when ordained, in an especial manner devoted to and employed in divine and sacred concerns, to mind and attend the good of Souls; And therefore they are peculiarly stiled the Servants of God, as in a more immediate manner and eminent degree to wait and attend on him, to manage and be diligent in a work of highest importance to the good of the World; and be the happy Instruments of procuring by their Prayers, and dispensing the greatest Blessings Men are capable of: Therefore they are justly honoured with this Noble Character, The Ministers of Christ. Hence saith St *Paul*, *Let a Man* (that is) *every Man account of us as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.* Such who are by God appointed to serve in his immediate presence, and offer daily Sacrifices of

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Praiſe and Thankſgiving to him, who are for the Inſtruction and Edification of the Church, to ſeaſon and poſſeſs the minds of People with true notions of God and his Worſhip, to offer Prayers for the People, and in his Name to bleſs them. Now, however unfit or unprepared, we may judge him that miniſters, yet let me ask you, whether while he obſerves and keeps cloſe to the manner uſed by our *Saviour* and his *Apoſtles* in adminiſtring, we may not do what becomes us, in the time of actual receiving the holy *Sacrament*? The leaſt that we can judge, is that at this time, he either is or appears to be very grave and ſerious. If ſo, as certainly no *Man* in his right wits can be otherwiſe, laying then aſide all prejudice and uncharitable reflections on your *Miniſter*, tell me, if 1. When you ſee and hear him conſecrate the Elements by Prayer and Thankſgiving, and ſeparating them from ordinary to holy and excellent Purpoſes, does or may not that Action ſolemnly performed, fill your mind with ſuch proper and divine *Meditations*? Does not this teach me how I ſhould be devoted to my God, and have a pure and clean heart, a mind free from guile and hypocricy, from all contagion and pollution? I that now am approached to this holy Table, how ought I to cleanſe and purifie my Soul and Body, and at this time offer up both, not only as a reaſonable but holy Sacrifice to my Lord and Saviour, and while the *Miniſter* doth his Duty and Office in Conſecrating the *Bread* and *Wine*, let me by fervent Prayer and humble thankfulneſs, devote, and give up my ſelf to God. Shall all that I ſee be pure and appropiate to God, and I either unclean or eſtranged, and at a diſtance from him? Should not I come clean and pure to ſo divine a *Feaſt*, and with a clean heart and ſanctified affections receive the holy *Jeſus*, and bid him welcome to my *Soul*? And you then only make the *Sacrament* beneficial to you, when your *Meditation* on its holy Author, does raiſe and excite, quicken and advance

vance your prime faculties, and fix them intirely on him, that's ſo ſincerely loved, as to lay down his life for you.

2. When you ſee the *Bread* broken and *Wine* poured out, then from having ill and prejudic'd thoughts of your Miniſter, turn your prejudice and keeneſt diſpleaſure againſt thoſe Vices and Paſſions you find too rife and prevalent in you; be ſenſible of your rebellions and affronts, of your unkindneſs and ingratitude, towards your dear and dying *Lord* and *Saviour*; your contempt and breach of his *Laws*, your deſpiſing his grace and love, in thus being broken, ſmitten and wounded for your Tranſgreſſions: Cenſure, condemn, and be ſevere againſt your Perſonal Miſcarriages: See the deformity and demerit of your ſins, in the broken and bleeding Body and Wounds of your *Saviour*. Was his Body bruiſed and broken to let out his Blood to atone for my ſins, and ſhall not I this day reflect on them with a melting and contrite Spirit, and offer up, which is the beſt oblation, a broken and relenting, a truly penitent and troubled mind, which God will not deſpiſe; and plead with ſtrong Cries and importunate Prayers, for pardon, mercy and ſalvation. Theſe and many more good thoughts, the very actions of the *Miniſter*, however faulty in himſelf, may occaſion and produce in that prepared mind at the *Lords Table*. And to Conclude,

3. Let me convince you of the care and direction of our *Church*, for making choice of ſober, diſcreet and well-diſpoſed Perſons, Men of Parts, good Learning, and inoffenſive Converſations.

When any are preſented to the *Biſhop* to be ordained, his Lordſhip gives this ſtrict and weighty charge to his *Chaplain* or Perſon preſenting, Take heed that the Perſons whom ye preſent unto us, be apt and meet for their Learning and godly Converſation, to Exerciſe their Miniſtry duly to the honour of God and the edifying of his Church; after which the Ordination being publick, the *Biſhop* deſires

ſires or challenges the whole *Congregation* to inſpect the Canditates, and whether they know any Impediment or notorious Crime in any *Perſon* preſented for Ordination, for the which they are unworthy that Office, let them come forth in the Name of God and declare the Crime or Impediment. After this the *Biſhop*, whoſe Power and Prayers we cannot but judge valid, and many times ſucceſsful, with the whole *Congregation* pray to this effect and in theſe words: Almighty God behold theſe thy Servants now call'd to this *Office* and *Adminiſtration*, repleniſh them ſo with the truth of thy Doctrine, and adorn them with innocency of life, that both by Word and good Example, they may faithfully ſerve in this Office, to the glory of thy *Name* and the edification of thy *Church*. I may add that ſolemn and ſacred Vow and Promiſe made in the preſence of God, and before many Witneſſes, that the ordained *Perſon* will apply himſelf with all diligence to frame and faſhion his own life and the lives of his Family, according to the *Doctrine* of *Chriſt*, and ſo make both himſelf and them as much as in him lies, good or wholſom Examples of the *Flock* of *Chriſt*: Nay, the Perſon admitted to full and *Prieſts* Orders, farther promiſes at his Ordination; that he will be diligent in *Prayers* and in reading the holy *Scriptures*, and in ſuch Studies as help to the knowledge of the ſame; laying aſide the Study of the *World* and the *Fleſh*. And not only publick, but every Perſons ſecret and private *Prayers*, are deſired in the time of Ordination on the behalf of the *Man* admitted to this great and dreadful work. Now if you, for to this end I give you an account of theſe things, I ſay, if you would (when your Miniſter fails in, or lives contrary to his *Duty* and important Concern) ſeriouſly and prudently intreat him to reflect on the *Oath* of *God* upon him to be ſtrict, ſober, grave, and inoffenſive in his *Converſation*; might it not in time, if he hath any ingenuity and ſenſe of his

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own or others *Salvation*, be a means to re-claim him, and thereby more capable of answering the great Design and end of his holy Calling: Nay, to silence those that think our *Church* either countenances or tollerates Vicious and Debauch'd *Clergy Men*, I refer you to the 75. *Cannon* or *Constitution* of our *Church*, Which is this,

No *Ecclesiastical* Persons shall at any time, other then for their honest necessities, resort to *Taverns* or *Ale-houses*, neither shall they Board or Lodge in any such places: They shall not give themselves to any servile or base Labour, or to Drinking or Riot, spending their time idly by day or night, Playing at Dice, Cards or Tables, or any other unlawful Games: But at all times convenient, they shall hear or read somewhat of the holy *Scriptures*, or shall occupy themselves with some other honest Study or Exercise; always doing the things which shall appertain to honesty, and endeavouring to profit the Church of *God*; having always in mind that they ought to excel all others in purity of life, and should be Examples to the People to live well and Christianly under pain of *Ecclesiastical Censures*, to be inflicted with severity according to the qualities of their offences. Now I hope I have given you not only sufficient satisfaction in this great Case, but also I trust you know that the Church of *England* is heartily affected with, and ashamed of the irregular and unbecoming lives of any of her Members, but its like a Dagger from the hand of a Child at the heart of the tendereſt and best of Mothers, for any that by their Place and Office are to reprove, shame and condemn the Debaucheries of others, to see or hear of any of her Children thus not only conforming to the corrupt manner and looseness of others, but coldly and faintly, if at all, commending a sober, godly and righteous life, altho the matter of their daily Confession and Prayer. I'll add no more but this, that they are a few, and those that in time I hope will see the folly, and reform and better their Conversations, that live disorderly.

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